Forestry Complex Converting to School

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Middle Musquodoboit's former forestry complex will soon become the area's newest elementary school. Contracts for site excavation and foundations have been awarded, and conversion of the complex into Musquodoboit Central Elementary School will begin before the end of the month.

The new school will feature several innovative concepts, including serving as the central resource for a new forestry education program being developed for area schools. The program will use existing woodland trails and a tree plantation containing native and exotic tree species that the Department of Natural Resources already uses as an educational resource.

The complex was developed in the late 1980s as a forestry education centre and to support tree-seedling production for reforestation.

Combining nature and high tech, Musquodoboit Central Elementary School will meet the current standard for technology in the classroom. The school's unique design will allow two classrooms to share a common computer area.

Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison said that through the forestry education program, the area will again become a focal point of nature studies.

"The forestry education program at Musquodoboit Central Elementary School highlights what can be accomplished when community consultation drives the process," he said. "The people of Musquodoboit value the strong links to nature provided by the forest nursery and forestry education complex. Their determination to see it rejuvenated as a central element of their new school has resulted in a great new educational concept that will benefit all schools in the area."

An existing 1,900-square-metre (20,000-square-foot) building on the site will be renovated to accommodate the school's classrooms, while a 1,900-square-metre addition will house a gymnasium, cafeteria and combination art-music room. Also on site, Halifax Regional Municipality will staff a health and recreation office.

Mr. Harrison said consultations between the community, the school board, and government departments will continue as the forestry education program is developed, the design process is completed, and further construction contracts are tendered.

In 1997, government identified the forestry complex as a possible alternative to the existing school, which is unsuitable for expansion. Recognizing that the forestry complex was considered surplus to government needs, staff visited the site and assessed

its potential as an elementary school. Last fall, the community endorsed the forestry complex site as its choice for the new school.

Natural Resources Minister Kennie MacAskill said he is pleased the former forestry complex will be put to good use. "This is an excellent example of co-operation among government departments by adapting and modifying an existing facility for the continued benefit of the community," he said.

Funding of $4.8 million has been approved for the project. Musquodoboit Central Elementary School is scheduled to open its doors in September 1999.

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